In the Claims

Please cancel Claim 12 and amend Claim 8 as follows:

1. (Previously amended)   An apparatus for effecting audible communication between a local system and a remote system over a Wide Area Network (WAN), comprising:

a remote modem configured in said remote system and receiving telephone transmission signals;

a converter electrically interconnected to a telephone interconnection of said remote modem and receiving said telephone transmission signals therefrom and providing an audio output signal;

an interface machine splitting a portion of said audio output signal from said converter, said interface machine including a first sound processing mechanism processing said audio output signal for transmission over said WAN as a network audio signal;

a second sound processing mechanism configured at said local system, receiving said network audio signal and processing said network audio signal to provide a continuous audio signal at said local system.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Original)   The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said second sound processing mechanism is a sound card running on said local system and configured to run an audio streaming program.

5. (Previously amended)   The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said interface machine is a personal computer.

6. (Previously amended)   The apparatus of claim 5 wherein said first sound processing mechanism is a sound card configured to run an audio streaming program and configured to transmit said network audio signal in the form of packets addressed only to said second sound processing mechanism.

7. (Previously added)   The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said remote modem is configured to communicate with automated systems that incorporate intelligence to gather status information.

8. (Currently amended)   A method for effecting audible communication between a local system and a remote system over a Wide Area Network (WAN), comprising the steps of:

configuring a remote communication mechanism in said remote system to receive a transmission signal;

converting said transmission signal into an analog audio output signal, <u>wherein said converting</u> step <u>involves a converter electrically connected to an interconnection of said remote communication mechanism to receive said transmission signals therefrom and to convert said transmission signals into said analog audio output</u>;

processing said analog audio output signal into packets for transmission over said WAN as a stream of audio packets;

receiving and processing said stream of audio packets to provide a continuous audio signal at said local system.

9. (Previously amended)   The method of claim 8 in which said remote communication mechanism is configured to communicate with automated systems that incorporate intelligence to gather status information and such status information is transmitted to said remote communication mechanism as a transmission signal.

10. (Previously amended)   The method of claim 8 wherein the transmission signal received by said remote communication mechanism is generated by a remote modem resident with a remote computer system.

11. (Cancelled)

3

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Previously amended)   The method of claim 8 wherein said processing step involves an interface machine configured to receive said analog audio output signal from said converter.

14. (Previously amended)   The method of claim 13 wherein said interface machine is a personal computer.

15. (Previously amended)   The method of claim 8 wherein said processing step involves a first sound processing mechanism used to process said analog audio output signal.

16. (Previously amended)   The method of claim 8 wherein said receiving step involves a second sound processing mechanism used to process said stream of packets.

17. (Previously added)   The method of claim 15 wherein said first sound processing mechanism is a sound card configured to run an audio streaming program.

18. (Previously added)   The method of claim 16 wherein said second sound processing mechanism is a sound card configured to run an audio streaming program.

19. (Previously amended)   An apparatus for communicating audio signals between a telephone interface of a remote modem and a listening station via a packet network comprising:

a signal converter electrically connected to a telephone interface of said remote modem and electrically converting between a telephone signal and an electrical audio signal;

an interface machine, electrically connected with said converter, for processing said electrical audio signal to generate a transmitted stream of audio data packets and transmitting said stream into a packet network, and for receiving an output stream of audio data from said packet network, and for processing said output stream into an electrical audio signal to said signal converter;

a listening station for receiving said transmitted stream of audio data packets via said packet network and processing said transmitted stream to generate a continuous output audio signal, and for receiving an audio input signal and processing said signal to generate said output stream of audio data packets, and for transmitting said output stream into a packet network;

whereby an operator at said listening station can listen to the telephone signals of said remote modem and can generate audio signals to be converted into remote telephone signals, without having an electrical audio path from the remote modem to the operator location.

20. (Previously amended) The apparatus of claim 19 in which said signal converter is a telephone line interface for providing impedance matching and voltage conversion between said telephone signal and an audio input and audio output of said interface machine.

21. (Previously amended) The apparatus of claim 19 in which said interface machine further comprises a personal computer having a soundcard and running an audio streaming program and in which said listening station is a computer running a streaming audio program and having a soundcard electrically connected to a loudspeaker.

22. (Previously amended) The apparatus of claim 21 in which said soundcard in said listening station further includes a microphone interface.

23. (Previously amended) The apparatus of claim 19 in which said packet network further comprises an Ethernet connection, and said transmitted stream is addressed only to the listening station and said output stream is addressed only to the interface machine.